



Town of Berwyn Heights

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MAYOR
Amanda M. Dewey

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)
Christopher S. Brittan Powell
Jason W. Papanikolas
Ethan D. Sweep

Worksession Minutes January 4, 2021 | 7:00 pm

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to join the meeting via Zoom and comment by telephone and email.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Christopher Brittan-Powell, Jason Papanikolas and Ethan Sweep. Also present were Town Manager (TM) Laura Allen, Town Clerk Kerstin Harper, Historical Committee Chair Debby Steele Snyder and Education Advisory Committee Chair Joanna Whitaker.

1. Announcements

Mayor Dewey reminded everyone to continue to follow COVID-19 guidelines while the vaccine is being rolled out. Residents are encouraged to sign up for the Town's e-newsletter to be informed about the latest news, including a pilot community engagement 'Neighbor to Neighbor' program.

Clerk Harper announced that she will be retiring in June 2021 after 17 years of service.

CM Papanikolas announced that new programs for the unemployed are being developed but there will be a delay in implementation as there are no federal regulations yet.

2. Approval of the Agenda

On a motion by MPT Kulpa-Eddy, and second by CM Papanikolas the agenda was approved 5 to 0.

3. Discussion Items

BHHC historic marker review: Mayor Dewey explained that the Historical Committee has reviewed the content of the historic markers it has erected around Town, as the country is revisiting its history and how it is reflected in monuments and statues. BHHC Chair Debby Steele-Snyder said that the Committee was requested by MPT Kulpa-Eddy to review its markers to see if any need to be changed. After reviewing and discussing the markers at meetings, the Committee recommends no changes. While there are markers that contain terminology and describe activities that would no longer be used or done today, they were typical for the period to which the markers refer. The marker content is generally factual and describes people and events in neutral language.

In discussion the following points were made:

- While monuments and statues tend to imply celebration of their subject, markers focus on historic facts;

- The BHHC might include a disclaimer in a publication stating that the content of historic markers should be understood in its historic context;
- The UMD C3 program might serve as vehicle for collaboration between the BHHC and the University on historic projects or issues.

The Council had no objection to leaving the markers as they are. Ms. Steele-Snyder will ask the BHHC to consider whether to publish a disclaimer that contextualizes the marker content.

BHEAC grant form review: Mayor Dewey said that the Council asked the Education Advisory Committee to help it design a more systematic process to award education grants than the ad-hoc approach taken to date.

BHEAC Chair Joanna Whitaker said that the Committee was asked by MPT Kulpa-Eddy to develop a form that gathers standardized information from applicants for Town education funds. The BHEAC has drafted a form, which can be adjusted depending on how the grant process is deployed. If the Council wishes to give some direction on what types of projects it is seeking, it could use an “request for proposals” (RFP)-type process that includes specific guidance to applicants. Alternatively, the Town could make the application form generally available and ask only for an explanation of how the grant funds would be used, and how the community would benefit. The Committee also discussed how to encourage applicants to partner with other organizations to potentially strengthen their proposals.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- The grant process should avoid using the term ‘RFP.’ Instead, the form might include an introductory paragraph specifying what a successful proposal would look like.
- The BHEAC recommends keeping the form as open-ended as possible to cover as many grant projects as possible.
- The form might be adopted for other types of Town grants.
- The form might add a question about how much money is requested.
- The grant process might specify a preferred submittal date that could be tied to the budget process. Alternatively, rolling due dates might be considered.
- The BHEAC suggests November and April as possible rolling due dates.
- Some education funding might be set aside for teacher supplies.
- The BHEAC plans to market the grant to local schools and education organizations and wonders if the Council wants to set restrictions on eligibility.
- Eligibility criteria should include that the applicant have a connection to Berwyn Heights.

The Council agreed to add form fields for the dollar amount requested and for showing a connection to Berwyn Heights. The BHEAC was requested to finalize the form and the grant process for Council’s review and approval.

Council Rules update - minutes, consent agenda: Mayor Dewey explained, at a previous worksession, the Council discussed changes to Council Rules 1 and 2 that would add a consent agenda process and update the minutes approval process to ensure they conform with practice. TM Allen said, based on the Council’s earlier discussion, she provided revised versions of Council Rules 1 and 2 showing the proposed changes. Council is requested to give feedback.

In discussion, the following changes to the Council Rules were discussed:

- CR 1-Content of Town Meeting Agenda: ‘Department Reports’ were renamed ‘Department Policy Reports’ to distinguish reports given by councilmembers from those submitted by department directors. They include standard PRECA reports although there usually are no policy issues to discuss.
- CR 1-Citizen Input at Worksessions: Citizens requesting an item be added to a worksession agenda need to identify themselves as Town residents and provide their name and address to staff responsible for drafting agendas.
- Residents wishing to comment at a Council meeting need not disclose their address to speak.
- Regarding CR 2- Completion & Distribution of Draft Minutes: Period for Town Clerk to complete draft minutes was extended to 20 business days, in part because minutes are now only approved once a month at Town meetings.
- Council should submit any edits to draft minutes within a specified period of 3 days.
- Minutes edited but not yet approved by the Town Council can be published in the Bulletin but must be identified as drafts.

TM Allen will revise the relevant sections of the Council Rules to include the Council’s comments prior to adoption at the next Town meeting.

Police Station facility update: TM Allen explained, in the course of a police station feasibility study last fall, Mann’s Woodward Architects suggested exploring whether the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD) is interested in a co-located public safety building. She has since spoken with BHVFD Chief McCoy and learned that the Fire Department is still weighing its options and that a decision on whether to construct a new fire station or upgrade the current one is not imminent. They are in a similar situation as the Town in that they don’t know how to finance such an expensive project. TM Allen believes the best option might be to apply for a bond bill to finance a joint public safety facility. However, finding a suitable location is a challenge.

In discussion, the following approach was outlined:

- Joint venture makes sense in terms of efficient collaboration and receiving favorable consideration by funding agencies.
- Mann’s Woodward Architects might be asked to evaluate the possibility of upgrading the current fire station or building a co-located facility on BHVFD’s vacant property across the street, if BHVFD is amenable.
- Town Hall and fire station may have to be in separate buildings.
- Funding might be requested for a municipal core services project comprising separate buildings.

Possible locations for a future joint public safety/ municipal complex to consider might include:

- BHVFD properties in the 5500 block of Seminole Street, including a vacant property at the corner of Cunningham Drive;
- Private properties with easy access to major roads when they come on the market, e.g. Ballew Avenue/ Branchville Road.
- Properties along Indian Creek belong to Park & Planning and would likely not be buildable without significant remediation.

The Council agreed to make municipal facility modernization a topic in upcoming budget priority setting discussions to establish parameters on how to proceed. TM Allen was asked to continue conversations with BHVFD about a joint approach.

Budget engagement questions: Mayor Dewey said this item is on the agenda to discuss how to best engage residents in the upcoming budget process. TM Allen said she was made aware and reviewed a citizen survey the Council conducted in November-December 2019, which produced very useful information about what Town services are considered important. Council is requested to provide feedback on whether this survey, or parts thereof, might be used to poll residents about budget priorities or whether the Council would like to take a new approach.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- In 2019, a survey was sent to a random sample of residents to reach those who do not comment on a regular basis. The survey was perhaps too long to elicit a high response rate.
- For purposes of this budget, any survey conducted should be short and simple to garner more responses.
- A simple survey might consist of a list of 10 budget priorities residents could rank or select three they consider most important.
- To reach residents who are less likely to comment, such as families with children, information could be posted at playgrounds.
- UMD students in the Campus-Community Connections (C3) program could be asked to help devise ways to reach more Town residents using 2019 survey questions.

The Council agreed to solicit resident input for the upcoming budget through a virtual Town Hall/ public hearing and a simple survey published in the Bulletin and online. TM Allen was asked to explore ways to take the survey via cell phone/ QR code and to advertise the survey through social media, signage at parks and playgrounds and through Town organizations.

4. Department Reports

Mayor Dewey noted that she received a comment from a citizen with a disability who commended Officer Rufino and BHPD for enforcing handicapped parking violations, which are important for ensuring resident accessibility. She reminded everyone to continue to follow COVID-19 protocols and to be attentive to information now being released about COVID-19 vaccinations at <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/3730/COVID-19-Vaccination>. Further, residents are reminded to lock their cars to prevent thefts from vehicles, to sign up for the e-newsletter and to consider participating in the new Neighbor-to-Neighbor program.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy said she received several questions about the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program. This 3-month pilot program seeks to encourage residents to talk with each other and then provide feedback on how it worked. Depending on its success, the program might be included in a welcome packet for new residents. Mayor Dewey added that TM Allen gave an interview to Prince George's County TV about the program, which the reporter indicated would be posted on the [PGC Community TV YouTube Channel](#).

MPT Kulpa-Eddy made announcements about a PGCPS boundary initiative, upcoming specialty school application deadlines, M-NCPPC's Youth Sports Strategic Plan and a cultural arts survey. With respect to Pepco's initiative to upgrade its streetlights, new LED lamps have been installed and can be seen in operation on 53rd Avenue in College Park's Hollywood neighborhood and on Rhode Island Avenue in Old Town.

CM Papanikolas announced that Treasurer Rodriguez has left the service of the Town and a temporary accountant has been hired while the Town is searching for a permanent replacement.

CM Brittan-Powell reported the Code Department is busy revising its business licensing program and made adjustments for COVID-19 operations. The Department has received complaints about auto repair shops being run on private properties and about too many people living in some single-family homes.

CM Sweep reported that he has received many compliments about Public Works employees. A new employee with a CDL license was hired and started working today. Mayor Dewey noted that Christmas trees can be discarded on yard waste collection days. TM Allen said Public Works will be collecting leaf piles that are still sitting at the curb this week.

5. Citizen Comments

There were none.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk